

Redaction of Information

[General Order 3228](#) states in part that parties must refrain from including, or must redact where inclusion is necessary, all **Social Security numbers, names of minor children, dates of birth, financial account numbers, and home addresses**. E-filers must use extra care to make sure that the PDF documents to be submitted to ECF are fully and completely free of any hidden data which may contain redacted information.

A common error in redacting information is to use the wrong method to redact the electronic file. Below is a partial list of methods **NOT** to use:

1. Changing the font to white does make it look like the words disappear, ***but they don't.***

Mrs. Lincoln said that _____ shot her husband.

Is actually this:

Mrs. Lincoln said that **John Wilkes Booth** shot her husband.

2. All word-processing programs (such as Microsoft Word, Corel WordPerfect, WordStar, etc.) retain a lot of hidden code (called "metadata") that can contain revision history and other information. This metadata can reveal anything that was contained in the file at any time, even text that was previously deleted or changed, and even if the file was re-saved. This is a useful tool for tracking revisions, but if this information is not purged from the document, anyone can view this information, even after it has been converted to PDF.
3. Adobe Acrobat (the full version) has some graphic and "commenting" tools which can black-out, cover over or remove sections of text. The edits these tools make can still be removed by anyone to reveal the text underneath.
4. Ink-marking or using semi-translucent tape or paper to cover areas of a document to be scanned can still sometimes show enough information for someone to see what was assumed hidden. Especially if that same data repeats a number of times across a document.

The court does not profess to be experts on file metadata, and we do not endorse any specific method to "sanitize" a document. There are a number of consulting and software resources which specialize in redaction of data if you need further information, but we do offer

some examples of ways to ensure that your documents may be redacted as you intended:

1. **Redacting a Word-Processing File** ([short version below](#)):

The best way to redact your document is to make sure that the source contains no unwanted text or data to begin with. One way is to use a simple-text editor (such as Windows *Notepad* : Start>Programs>Accessories>Notepad) to create the final redacted version of the document. *Notepad* cannot save any hidden code, since it only uses simple-text (.txt) format. This format can only save basic text info ([ASCII](#)) so if it's in *Notepad*, "what you see is what you get", and nothing more. Here's how (we will assume for these instructions that you are using Microsoft *Word*, the same instructions work for WordPerfect, WordStar, etc.):

- A. In your original *Word* document, **replace** all the text you wish redacted with the word **[REDACTED]**, and/or do a FIND AND REPLACE of all the text you wish redacted.

Example:

Replace all instances of "**John Wilkes Booth**" with "**[NAME REDACTED]**", "**JWB**" or whatever you deem fit. Be careful that you do this for all instances and for all variants of the text you need to redact (if you do a find/replace for "**John Wilkes Booth**", it will not replace "**John Booth**" or "**John Wilkes Booth's**" or "**J. Wilkes Booth**" because those phrases are totally different to the computer!)

Save this as a new "temp-redacted" version, then...

- B. Copy all the text from *Word* and paste it into [Notepad*](#):

- A. Select all the text in Word
(type **Ctrl-A**, or click **Edit=>Select All**)
- B. Copy all the text in Word
(type **Ctrl-C** or click **Edit=>Copy**)
- C. Past all the text into Notepad
Start>Programs>Accessories>Notepad, or **Start>Run**, type **notepad**, click **OK**.
To paste, type **Ctrl-V** or click **Edit=>Paste** into *Notepad*. This will remove all hidden code from the document, but as you will notice, it will also remove most of the formatting (page numbering, tabs, justification, paragraph numbering/bullets, bold/italics/underlining, fonts, etc.). If you now PDF this *Notepad* document directly from within *Notepad*, the PDF file will contain only the info you see within *Notepad* and nothing more, so it is totally safe.
- D. Save this file in *Notepad* as the "text-redacted"

version. It will now be a text (.txt) file.

- c. If you must reformat the document (usually you will), then you must re-open the "text-redacted" version back in *Word* because *Notepad* can not do any formatting. This is fine to do, but you **MUST** only do so in a **BRAND NEW BLANK FILE!** Do not place the text from *Notepad* back into the same *Word* file that it originated from. Here's how:
 - i. Save and close the *Notepad* file.
 - ii. In *Word*, select **File>Open**, then open the "text-redacted" text (.txt) version.
 - iii. You may then reformat the text however you need and save your work as the "final-redacted" version.
Be sure you do not change any text, just the formatting.
- d. This *Word* file you can convert to PDF and all it will contain is only the text and formatting you see on your screen. Convert/Save this file as the "PDF-redacted" version and efile it.
- e. The "text-redacted" and "temp-redacted" versions may now be deleted (and should be).

In a nutshell... (short version)

- A. Find & Replace all the text to be redacted in your original file and save it as a "temp-redacted" version.
 - B. Copy all the text from the "temp-redacted" version and paste it into *Notepad*, save this as the "text-redacted" version and close it.
 - c. Open the "text-redacted" version in your word-processing program, make any needed formatting changes, PDF this file and efile it.
 - d. Clean up the temp files - DONE!
2. **Redacting a Scanned File (tiff, jpeg, gif, etc.):** This is a little more tricky since you are modifying an "image" or photo of a file and the data which contains that image may not be fully removed or destroyed using common software tools. Check the support documentation of the software you use to manipulate graphics (such as Photoshop, Paint, etc.) to find if their tools are sufficient to redact a document. You may also want to consider printing-out the document and using [method 4 below](#).
3. **Redacting a PDF File (scanned or converted):** This is the most delicate and difficult to do correctly. Adobe Acrobat (any version) by itself can **not** redact a document using any of the built in tools. There are plug-ins (add-on software) for Adobe which can do this, such as [Redax](#). You may also want to consider printing-out the document and using [method 4 below](#).
4. **Redacting a Paper Document:** Before scanning the

document:

1. Cut-out (literally) all the text to be redacted and properly dispose of (shred) the clippings. This method will always be 100% effective.
2. Use opaque (100% impenetrable by light; neither transparent nor translucent) tape or paper to cover over the sections to be redacted. Do not use plain-paper as the scanner may pick up images through the paper. Even some black paper may allow some light reflection - so be careful.

If you would like more information, here are a few links:

[A New Generation of Redacting Tools](#)

***NOTE:** Windows *Notepad* may not be able to work with large files. You could try working with the file in sections, or you could try using a different simple-text editor, such as [Notepad2](#) (free), [Crimson Editor](#) (free) or [others](#).